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ABSTRACT

The second of two reports on the TOPS Program (Teaching Outreach Prevention School), a group work approach for emotionally disturbed elementary students, describes TOPS' parent training and support groups. Reasons for parent groups are discussed, particularly for parents of children with emotional handicaps. Techniques for motivating parents are noted, including providing opportunity for information sharing and suggestion giving. The thrust of the approach is said to be allowing parents to understand their child's behavior patterns and to help them handle the problems. Objectives and goals of parent training are presented along with the agenda for six sessions which focus on discipline, behavior management, and assertiveness training. Appended is a paper by S. Berkowitz, "ABC's of Behavior Modification." (CL)

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DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent Support Group Training Manual

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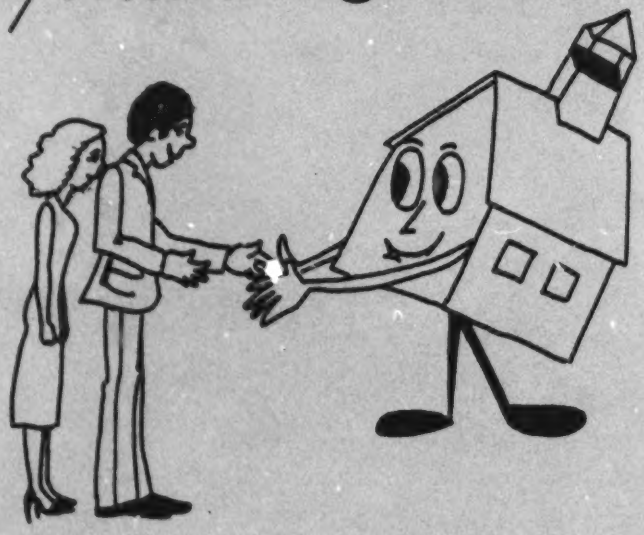
TOPS PROGRAM

A School/Mental Health Cooperative



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TOPS

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TOPS PROGRAM
A SCHOOL/MENTAL HEALTH COOPERATIVE

PARENT SUPPORT GROUP TRAINING MANUAL

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DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

August 1981

Dedication

This Parent Group Training Manual is dedicated to our wonderful TOPS parents who taught us as they learned. Special thanks to Pat del Valle, TOPS Psychologist, and Gloria Friedman, Community Mental Health (CHI) therapist, who did an outstanding job of co-facilitating the parent group. A group of strangers grew into a group of mutually supportive people whose participation was a key factor in helping children grow and maintain vital gains.

Arline Loewenstein, Ph.D.
TOPS Project Manager
August 1981

TOPS

A SCHOOL/MENTAL HEALTH COOPERATIVE PROJECT

Teaching	-	designing therapeutic educational environments to maximize learning; in-service training of teachers, counselors and school psychologists.
Outreach	-	to families and children experiencing emotional problems, by mental health therapists and school personnel.
Prevention	-	of emotional difficulties through early identification and treatment.
School	-	community mental health agency cooperation in providing therapy, training and consultation.

TOPS PARENT TRAINING AND SUPPORT GROUPS

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TOPS PARENT TRAINING AND SUPPORT GROUPS

I.

PURPOSE

This training model is designed to serve parents of emotionally handicapped students involved in the TOPS Project, a school-mental health cooperative program funded by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped and the Dade County Public Schools. A major purpose is to assist facilitators in beginning parent-training and support groups, motivating parents to attend and benefit from the groups focusing on a planned approach combining both didactic and experential components.

Systems theory suggests that when an emotionally disturbed child is identified, one often sees a dysfunctional family. In some cases, the child who is "identified" may be a symptom of the family's distress and faulty communication. Yet, frequently, an essentially normal family is deeply strained by coping with the volatile, frequently inconsistent demands of an extremely aggressive or withdrawn child.

When these children are identified within a school or mental health system, the thrust of the TOPS Program is not to blame or engender guilt, but to join with the parents in helping increase awareness of their children's needs and develop more effective coping methods, particularly in the areas of communication, assertiveness and behavior management. Whether the family's conflicts are directly related to the child's or whether their perceived distress is mainly a reaction to having a handicapped child, the family's needs for understanding, training and support are strong.

With many other handicaps such as learning disabilities, mental retardation, or hearing impairment, the disability is felt more to be within the

child. Parents of emotionally disturbed children profit from support as they sample what is offered. These parents are more likely to engage in a parent training/support group than in a situation which demands a lot of their time, until involvement is high.

II.

PARENT GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Over the last fifteen years, Parent Training has become an increasingly growing phenomenon on the American scene. An awareness is developing among some segments of the population that individuals are not born with the skills of an effective parent. The knowledge of any adult embarking on parenthood is usually derived from experiences that she/he learned from her/his own parents. Many parents repeat the same patterns which were modeled for them by their own parents, or they function in as opposite a manner as possible.

Most individuals indicate they value a democratic lifestyle for themselves. Thus, it is important that children see democratic principles through their family interactions. The extreme positions of authoritari vs. permissive styles can limit the development of an individual as an independent problem-solver in today's complex society.

Parents are not innately aware of the complex pattern of human behavior, including concepts of reinforcement. Understanding the behavioral inter actions that take place between parent and child can be an invaluable parental tool.

Parents are not automatically aware of child development stages. It is helpful to know where the child is, both physically and emotionally. Readiness or lack of readiness may determine the type of response to a given behavior.

During the last quarter-century, much has been written about human communication skills. Many skills such as active listening, problem solving and self-assertion can be taught. These tools help us achieve needs

while maintaining the dignity of the individuals with whom we communicate.

The structure of the American family is dramatically changing. More and more parents are being asked to bear a lot of parental responsibility without the support of a spouse. Single parenting and reconstituted families place more stress on parents and children; therefore, parents are in need of even greater support to deal with their ever-changing roles.

III.

ORGANIZING PARENT GROUPS

There is a natural tendency within our society for parents to get together to discuss both joys and tribulations of child-rearing. The degree to which parents are willing to attend and participate in formal parent education groups depends on a variety of factors.

Individual differences - For the person developing a parent group, these individual differences need to be taken into consideration. On the one hand are parents who seek out direct treatment in order to better understand themselves, their motivations and their relationships. On the other end of the continuum are parents who resist "owning feelings" or problems and are vehemently against any type of educational involvement.

Most parents fall somewhere between these two extremes, with many able to participate and beome involved in an educational program as long as the initial focus is on their children and not on themselves. It is therefore important for individuals who are starting parent groups to be extremely sensitive to typical types of resistence which may be encountered.

Most parents are more apt to become involved in a parent group if they perceive the thrust to be educational rather than therapeutic. Many parents are unsure and suspicious of therapy, where the focus is centered on them. They are much more able to tolerate the focus on their child. By the same token, it is important that a parent not get the message that she/he is a poor parent and needs this group. Nobody does well having his ego bruised.

Parents are often more amenable to participating in a group that is short-term. The lack of a long-term commitment gives them an opportunity to

move through stages of shock, disbelief and grief before acceptance; the need for training and support is particularly acute with parents of emotionally handicapped students. Their feelings of helplessness, lack of confidence, loss of self-esteem and guilt are often overwhelming. As the child's needs for nurturance and consistency in management increase, the parents' confidence, knowledge and skill in being able to provide this may drop considerably. Often the parent has been called into the school with a myriad of complaints regarding the child's behavior, with the urgent message that "something" must be done, but with no specific assistance in how to do this. Frequently, these parents' own lives are in disarray due to death, divorce, depression, marital difficulties and other personal problems. Some parents seek professional help and thereby benefit, while others go to a host of professionals, and conflicting methods, messages and approaches may have little carry-over to school behavior. Others are afraid to risk their own self-esteem by admitting they may have a problem and project their anger, fear and disappointment to the school. Others may feel further alienated from the child who is labeled "disturbed" and feel helpless in dealing with emotional disturbance.

It has been the philosophy of the TOPS Program that emotional disturbance is frequently seen as the result of interaction between a vulnerable child and an environment not responsive to special needs. In addition to working directly with the child, the program includes intensive work with the child's most significant others, in the classroom and the family. By bringing these primary shaping forces together, learning and working cooperatively in unison, the child progresses academically and behaviorally; parents become effective, positive change-agents; both parents and children gain in feelings of mastery and self-esteem.

IV.

MOTIVATING PARFNTS

It is very important to let parents know their participation is a vital part of their child's educational program. Experience in the program suggests children show greatest gains when their parents are active and involved. It is extremely important to be positive about the child's strengths in this initial meeting, since progress depends on mobilizing strengths of the child and his family. Some parents appear dependent on the professional's expertise in "fixing" whatever may be wrong, and an important thrust of parent training and support groups is a shared partnership with parents and professionals working together as positive change agents.

Methods of motivating parents which appear to have been successful include beginning with an orientation meeting where parents are invited to meet staff, learn about program components, confer about the individual child with TOPS personnel and see the child's work folders. At this meeting, the importance of participating in the parent training and support group is emphasized and parents meet co-facilitators. Group meetings are scheduled at a time for the parents' convenience. Refreshments are served, the atmosphere is warm and non-threatening and attendance is high since notification is done by mail, phone calls and notes sent home with children, and follow-up phone calls by the psychologist and mental health therapist group co-facilitators are made as reminders.

Resistant parents more frequently respond to structure which gives them as much distance as possible at first. Therefore, a more successful response might initially be to use highly structured formats which emphasize content more than process.

Another technique that seems to break down resistance is to provide opportunity for information-sharing and suggestion-giving. This methodology is

least-threatening to parents since it simulates the natural exchange of information to which they are accustomed.

As trust develops, the didactic group moves into a more process-oriented approach. The focus of the TOPS parent group was both didactic and process-oriented, and it was found that parents' confidence and feelings changed in a positive direction following positive behavior or change.

V.

TRAINING TECHNIQUES

The Art of Parenting program by B. Wagonseller, M. Burnett, B. Salzberg and J. Burnett is used for training purposes. Primary emphasis of this series is to present multi-media materials that will allow parents to understand their child's behavior patterns, and assist parents in devising techniques and methods for handling problems. This program is used for introduction of skills and concepts, and was selected due to its comprehensive approach and practical applications for parents of various educational and cultural backgrounds.

This program offers training in communication, assertion training, behavior management techniques and motivation and discipline. The didactic approach includes a filmstrip/tape presentation followed by lecture and discussion. This format is modified to benefit parents of children with emotional and behavioral difficulties, by adding outside reading lists, offering homework assignments for practice and reinforcement of concepts presented. These homework assignments are turned in and discussed at the beginning of the following session, where parents are given individualized assistance. In addition, as noted on the Training Modules, individual child-raising problems are dealt with and there is stress on mutual support, where initially groups leaders provided most of the feedback and support. Parents often offer support and suggestions to each other, and in the final phase many parents evolve their own solutions to management problems.

Role-playing, modeling and problem-solving activities are included and peer feedback proves very beneficial. Mutual support is the strength and common thread throughout all group meetings. The parents appear to benefit from handouts and homework given at the meetings to allow for skills reinforcement and implementation. Also, homework functions as a means of mobilizing many parents who may feel helpless and powerless.

While The Art of Parenting was successfully used in the TOPS Parent Training and Support Group and is highly recommended, other training programs can be used. The group can also be successful without the use of any audio-visual materials, although it is recommended that the format of skills development in Communication, Assertiveness Training and Behavior Management Techniques including motivation, charting behavior and discipline be followed.

Didactic material can be presented by the therapist in the form of discussion, written material and role playing. The following recommended readings offer ideas for presenting these topics.

1. Becker, W. Parents are teachers: A child management program. Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1971

2. Denhoff, E. The impact of parents on the growth of exceptional children. Exceptional Children, 1960, 26, 271-274

3. Gordon, T. Parent effectiveness training. New York: Wyden, Inc., 1970.

4. Joseph, J. & Zern, G. The emotional problems of children: A guide for parents. New York: Crown Publishers, 1954.

5. Kroth, R. Communicating with parents of exceptional children. Denver, Colorado: Love Publishing, 1979.

6. Madsen, D.K. & Madsen, C.H. Parents-children-discipline: A positive approach. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1970.

7. Patterson, G.R., Reid, J.B., Jones, R.R. & Conger, R.E. A social learning approach to family interventions. Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1975.

8. Patterson, G.R. Families: Applications of social learning to family life. Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1971, 1975.

9. Patterson, G.R. & Guillion, E. Living with children: New methods for parents and teachers. Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1968.

10. Smith, J.M. & Smith, D.E.P. Child management: A program for parents and teachers. Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1976.

11. Wagonseller, B.R. & McDowell, R. You and your child: A common sense approach to successful parenting. Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1979.

PARENTS' EXPRESSED GOALS

1. Communication skills (to improve communications between parent and child)

2. To learn behavior management techniques for increasing positive behavior
   a. getting child up in the morning
   b. decreasing cursing behavior
   c. decrease temper tantrums

3. To learn ways to deal with child in a positive manner

4. To learn ways of increasing child's motivation

5. To assist in handling crisis conflicts with the child

PARENT GROUP OBJECTIVES

Objective I - To introduce leaders

Objective II - To introduce parents

Objective III - Leaders discuss goals of the group

Objective IV - Have the parents identify what they hope to accomplish in the group

Objective V - To introduce participants to basic concepts of the following skills:

1. Communication skills
2. Assertion training
3. Behavior management techniques
   a. Motivation
   b. Methods
   c. Discipline

Objective VI - To enhance participation in the group by offering open discussion regarding specific skills presented during each meeting

Objective VII - To offer experiential exercises such as role-playing, modeling and problem-solving

Objective VIII - To assist in designing, implementing and monitoring individualized home/school behavior management systems

Objective IX - To reinforce skills learned and enhance participation by assigning homework

Objective X - (Closing) To give support by thanking parents for attending meeting; express feeling of looking forward to seeing them next week

SPECIFIC SKILLS LEARNED

1. Defining and describing behavior
2. Observing and counting behavior
3. Taking baseline and formulating goals
4. Shaping and fading
5. Behavioral contracting
6. Setting up token economies
7. Using extinction and reinforcement of incompatible behavior
8. Implementing time-out
9. Administering punishment
10. Developing active listening
11. Making schedules of reinforcement
12. Using assertion techniques
13. Giving descriptive praise and constructive criticism
14. Improving communication skills

Sample Agenda - to be given out at first meeting

TOPS PARENT GROUP

Presenters _____

_____

Place _____

Parent Group #1

Date and Time _____

TOPIC: Communication

Discussion and Filmstrip

Parent Group #2

Date and Time _____

TOPIC: Assertiveness Training

Discussion and Filmstrip

Parent Group #3

Date and Time _____

TOPIC: Behavior Management Techniques - Motivation

Discussion and Filmstrip

Parent Group #4

Date and Time _____

TOPIC: Behavior Management Techniques - Methods

Discussion and Filmstrip

Parent Group #5

Date and Time _____

TOPIC: Behavior Management Techniques - Discipline

Discussion and Filmstrip

TOPS PARENT GROUP TRAINING MODULES

Parent Group #1 COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Objective I: To introduce leaders

Objective II: To welcome participants into the group

Activitis: The parents are welcomed and asked to introduce themselves, tell the group their names and what they like to be called, and tell the age of their child in the program.

Objective III: Leader discusses the goals of the group. Have parents identify what they hope to accomplish in the group.

Activities:
1. Provide peer support.
2. Provide an opportunity to learn from others and to teach others.
3. Provide participants the opportunity to learn and relearn skills of parenting.
4. Give agenda hand-out.

Objective IV: To introduce participants to basic concepts of communication skills in the film, "The Art of Parenting".

Activities:
1. Briefly discuss basic concepts of communication.
   a) Be supportive
   b) Set a good example.
   c) Listen.
   d) Repeat key ideas.
2. Show the filmstrip, "The Art of Parenting: Communication".
3. Encourage parent response to simulations from the filmstrip.
4. Leaders role-play situations for parents.
5. Parents give their own examples
6. Stimulate open discussion regarding communication skills.

Objective V: To enhance parents' participation in group in between group meetings.

Activities:
1. Give out hand-out, "You Can Change Your Child's Behavior" and readings and exercises on communication skills (The Art of Parenting or similar activies of choice.
2. Ask parents to complete this reading homework prior to the next meeting.

Objective VI: (Closing) Thank parents for attending: express feeling of looking forward to seeing them next week.

Parents are telephoned and notices sent home with children to remind them of the meeting.

Parent Group #2 ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

Objective I: To welcome parents to the group

Objective II: To reinforce communication skills

Activity: Briefly review homework assignments and allow for discussion.

Objective III: To introduce participants to basic concepts of assertiveness training

Activities:

1. Briefly discuss concepts of assertiveness training.
   a) Good eye contact
   b) Body language
   c) Voice tone and pitch
   d) Good body posture
   e) Place and timing
2. Show the filmstrip, "The Art of Parenting: Assertiveness Training".
3. Have parents respond to simulation from the filmstrip by role-playing.
4. Have parents give their own examples.
5. Offer open discussion concerning assertiveness.

Objective IV: To reinforce skills presented

Activities:

1. Give out readings and exercises on assertiveness training (The Art of Parenting).
2. Ask parents to complete homework prior to the next meeting.

Objective V: (Closing) Thank parents for attending; express feeling of looking forward to seeing them next week.

Parents are telephoned and notices sent home prior to the meeting to inform them of the next meeting.

Parent Group #3 BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT - MOTIVATION

Objective I: To welcome parents to the group

Objective II: To reinforce previously learned assertion skills

Activity: Briefly review homework assignments and allow for discussion.

Objective III: To introduce basic concepts of behavior management

Activities:

1. Briefly discuss concepts of motivation.
   a) Social rewards vs. non-social rewards.
   b) Reward immediately.
   c) Be consistent.
   d) Have reasonable and clearly stated expectations.
   e) Reward frequently and vary the rewards.
2. Show the filmstrip, "The Art of Parenting: Behavior Management Techniques - Motivation".
3. Parents respond to simulations from the filmstrip.
4. Parents give their own examples.
5. Allow for group to problem-solve a specific case presented.

Objective IV: To give participants opportunity to work on their child's behavior they would like to change

Activities:

1. Parents identify their child's behavior they would like to change.
2. Parents are given hand-out, "TOPS Behavior Tally".
   a) Parents are instructed to count the times this target behavior occurs.
   b) Leaders go over an example for the group.
   c) Parents are asked to bring hand-out to the next session.
   d) Parents are told that when this behavior has improved, the same method can be used to work on other behaviors.

Objective V: To reinforce skills presented

Activities:

1. Give out readings and exercises on motivation (The Art of Parenting).
2. Ask parents to complete homework prior to the next meeting.

Parents are telephoned and notices sent home to inform them of the next meeting.

Parent Group #4 BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT - METHODS

Objective I: To welcome parents to the group

Objective II: To reinforce previously learned skills

Activities:
1. Discussion of what they have found useful from past groups.
2. Discuss the results of the tally sheet.

Objective III: To introduce basic concepts of behavior management methods

Activities:
1. Briefly discuss concepts of behavior management methods.
   a) Tokens (stars, poker chips and marbles)
   b) Charting progress
   c) Set goals that the child can reach
   d) Praise good work and behavior
   e) Disregard negative behavior
   f) Behavioral contracting
   g) Consistency
2. Show the filmstrip, "The Art of Parenting: Behavior Management Techniques - Methods".
3. Parents respond to simulations from the filmstrip.
4. Parents give their own examples.

Objective IV: To assist parents in setting up an individualized home/school behavior management system for the TOPS child

Activities:
1. Parents are given the hand-out, "Daily Record Sheet".
   a) A detailed explanation is given of charting positive behavior, i.e., use one of the tally sheets from the previous session.
   b) A detailed explanation is given of setting up a reward system.
   c) If there are two leaders, the group divides into two smaller groups: a leader in each group assists the parents in setting up a program for each child.
   d) Provide support and encouragement for implementation.

Objective V: To reinforce concepts of behavior management.

Activities:
1. Give out readings and exercises for behavior management as homework.
2. Ask parents to complete assignment before next session.

Parents are telephoned and notices sent home to inform them of the next meeting. This is a crucial component of the process: each parent is telephoned during the week. Assistance and support are given.

Parent Group #5 BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT - DISCIPLINE

Objective I: To welcome parent to the group.

Objective II: To reinforce previously learned skills and monitor home programs

Activities:
1. Ask if there are questions or comments concerning the homework readings.
2. Check on each home program and look at graphs.
3. Provide support to the group.

Objective III: Basic concepts of behavior management discipline

Activities:
1. Briefly discuss concepts of behavior management - discipline.
   a) Extinction
   b) Time-out
   c) Response cost
   d) Punishment
2. Show the filmstrip, "The Art of Parenting: Behavior Management Techniques - Discipline".
3. Parents respond to simulations from the filmstrip.
4. Parents give their own examples.

Objective IV: To deal with separation process

Activities:
1. Ask parents how they feel about group ending.
2. Give them the option to vote for another one or two meetings.
3. If they vote for another meeting, give them homework assignments.

Parents are telephoned and notices sent home to inform them of the next meeting.

Parent Group #6

Objective I: To welcome parents to the group.

Objective II: To give parents the opportunity to look at what they would like to have more clarity in parenting techniques. (If there are two leaders, the group may be divided into two small groups.)

Objective III: Give parents evaluation form on parent group.

Objective IV: Acknowledgement is made of parents' efforts and participation.

Activity: TOPS Parent Group Certificates are presented.

Objective V: Parents are encouraged to set up appointments with mental health therapists for either individual or family therapy. This is the next part of the program.

TOPS PARENT GROUP EVALUATION

Please comment on the following areas:

1. Ideas and techniques on communications skills were provided in an informative and helpful manner.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree

2. The meetings provided ideas and techniques on assertiveness training in an informative and helpful manner.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree

3. The meetings provided ideas and techniques in motivating children in an informative and helpful way.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree

4. The meetings provided techniques in behavior management methods in an informative and helpful way.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree

5. Techniques and methods of discipline presented were useful.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree

6. Group leaders provided a supportive atmosphere to teach parenting skills.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree

7. The filmstrips and discussions offered practical information.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree

8. The handouts were valuable aids for me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree

We welcome your additional comments (back of page).

A

B

C's

OF BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

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BEHAVIORAL CONTRACTING

The procedure of behavioral contracting provides the opportunity for the formal and explicit arrangements and exchanges of behaviors and reinforcers between two or more people - parent and child, teacher and student.

Contracting provides for each party of the contract to reciprocally reward the other parties for desirable behavior. It helps the parties to "catch each other being good". Contracting emphasizes the use of positive reinforcement and shaping procedures.

The contract is usually written and results from the direct negotiation of the people involved. Initially, each individual lists the behaviors and reinforcers desired from the other parties to the contract. Each party to the contract arranges, through negotiation and accomodation, the reasonable and equitable provision of reinforcers for each other participant, contingent upon their fulfillment of the contract.

Rewards and behaviors in the contract should be clearly described. Rewards should immediately follow the behavior, and should at first be made contingent upon small bits of behavior or small improvements in the behavior. The contract should state the behavior in positive terms - the described on-task behavior, rather than in negative terms. Start off with only a few behaviors, and focus on those that are manageable.

ABC'S OF BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

I. Defining and Describing Behavior

II. Observing and Counting Behavior: Recording Techniques

III. Baselines and Goals

IV. ABC's of Behavior Modification: Antecedents "Rules"

V. ABC's of Behavior Modification: Consequences - Strengthening Behaviors

VI. ABC's of Behavior Modification: Consequences - Weakening Behaviors

VII. Token Economics

VIII. Schedules of Reinforcement

IX. Shaping and Fading

X. Behavioral Contracting

BEHAVIORAL CONTRACTING

WHAT IS A CONTRACT?

A behavioral contract is a written agreement specifying the means of arranging the exchange of behaviors and reinforcers between two or more persons. The contract specifies:

a. Where and under what conditions;

b. Who is to do what for whom;

c. What reinforcers will follow the behavior.

WHAT GOES INTO A CONTRACT?

1. Where and when will behavior take place.
2. Clearly understood description of target behavior(s) to be changed.
3. Specific consequences to follow each specific behavior.
4. Who will record and count behavior.
5. Amount and kind of reinforcer(s) and bonuses to be used.
6. Who will give out rewards.
7. Delivery schedule of reinforcer(s).
8. Penalty for non-compliance with contract terms.
9. Date contract is to begin, end and be renegotiated.
10. Date to review progress.
11. Name of outsider who will monitor contract periodically.
12. Signatures of all parties.

A = Contract

B = Behavior specified in contract

C = Reward

WHY A WRITTEN CONTRACT?

1. To make explicit the agreements and expectations of all the parties involved in the contract.

2. To provide the opportunity for all parties to negotiate and have input into the contract.

3. To act as a reminder or cue to engage in the agreed-to behaviors.

4. To make more likely that the parties will engage in the behaviors that they have agreed to.

RULES FOR CONTRACTING

State behaviors in clear positive terms.

Not too many rules.

Start at or below baseline level.

Reinforce small steps.

Specify antecedents.

Reward immediately.

Reward improvement.

Add bonus incentives.

Specify who (and how) will make recordings.

Specify time for renegotiation.

BEHAVIORAL CONTRACTING

A behavioral, or contingency, contract is a means of arranging the exchange of behaviors and reinforcers among two or more persons. The contract specifies:

1. Who is to do what for whom,
2. Where and under what conditions, and
3. What reinforcers will follow the behavior.

Basically, the contract states, "If you do X, then I will do X." You do something good for me, then I will do something good for you.

Homme and Tosti* list ten rules for writing effective contracts:

Rule 1: The contract must provide for immediate reinforcement.

Rule 2: Initial contracts should require small bits of behavior, and then provide for a progress check. Contracts must call for and reinforce small approximations. At first, simple-to-perform approximations should be required.

Rule 3: Reinforce frequently with small amounts.

Rule 4: Contracts should call for and reward accomplishments, rather than mere obedience.

Rule 5: Reward the performance after it occurs. First the behavior, then some reward follows. "First work, then play."

Rule 6: Agree upon, and state a criterion of quality, as well as of quantity.

Rule 7: The contract must be fair. Relate the amount of reward to the amount of performance. The agreement must be of relatively equal weight for all parties.

Rule 8: Terms of the contract must be clear and explicitly stated. It is best to actually describe the behavior. The conditions under which it will occur (where and when?). The criterion for successful performances and a specific description of the reward.

Rule 9: The contract must be stated in positive terms. Describe the behavior that is desired, the positive behavior, rather than the negative or unwanted behavior.

Rule 10: Contracting works best when it is used systematically and consistently, going on all the time.

*Homme, L., and Tosti, D. Behavior Technology: Motivation and Contingency Management. Individual Learning Systems, San Rafael, California, 1971.

The advantages of a contract to all parties are:

1. It requires the input of all parties.
2. The parties must negotiate, accomodate and talk to each other.
3. The contract makes specific reference to observable behaviors.
4. It offers a consistent and possible predictable means of arranging behaviors and reinforcers for all parties.
5. The contract can function as a reminder (antecedent) to provide reinforcers.
6. It can teach parties to tune into "good" behavior.

REMEMBER:

Specify exact behaviors.
Not too many rules.
Small steps.
Positive rules.
Reward immediately.
Reward frequently.
Reward improvement.

BEHAVIORAL CONTRACT

I, _____, agree to perform the following duties and behaviors:

1.

2.

3.

These behaviors will be performed at _____,

will be observed by _____ and recorded in

this manner:

_____

In return for engaging in the above behaviors, I will receive the

following from _____.

1.

2.

3.

If either party does not adhere to the terms in this contract, then the entire contract is considered null and void until the next renegotiation.

The duration of this contract is from _____ to

_____. The contract will be renegotiated on

_____.

(Signed) _____

(Signed) _____

(Signed) _____

SAMPLE CONTRACT

BEHAVIORAL CONTRACT

I, Timothy Tops, agree to perform the following duties and behaviors:

1. Be home from school each day by 4:15 p.m.
2. To tell my mother where I am going and when I will return, each time I leave the house.
3. To be home for dinner by 6:00 p.m.
4. To be in bed each school night by 9:30 p.m.

These behaviors will be performed at my home, will be observed by my parents or grandmother and recorded in this manner:

on a daily checklist taped to the refrigerator and recorded by them.

In return for engaging in the above behaviors, I will receive the following from my parents or grandmother:

1. 15¢
2. 15¢
3. One extra hour of TV watching after dinner.
4. Buying lunch in school the following day.

If either party does not adhere to the terms in this contract, then the entire contract is considered null and void until the next renegotiation, and there will be no reward for the behavior for that day.
The duration of this contract is from September 12 to September 18. The contract will be renegotiated on September 18.

(Signed) Timothy Tops (child)

(Signed) Theresa Tops (parent)

(Signed) _____ (counselor)

TOPS BEHAVIOR TALLY

NAME _____

ONE TARGET BEHAVIOR

		Daily Total
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
	Tally each time the behavior occurs. (i.e., ~~1111~~ 11 = 7 times)	Weekly Total

Before measuring behavior, the parent needs to define specifically the behavior to be observed. In the group, the parents learn how to behaviorally define their child's behavior. For example, a vague behavior such as aggression is redefined as kicking. Kicking can be observed and counted.

When possible, the behavior is stated in a positive way. For example, hitting sibling during play becomes "playing cooperatively". This positive approach helps the parent to "catch them being good". Attention is a strong reinforcer.

The group decided that measuring behaviors would be done according to how often the behavior occurs. A TOPS Behavior Tally Sheet is used to record the one target behavior which the parents want most to change. Each day, the parent makes a tally and put the daily total in the box. Weekly totals are placed after a week of counting.

Thus, parents take a baseline which tells how many times the specific behavior is happening, before interventions. This information is important to have to show the severity of the problem and to evaluate the behavioral intervention. The parents take baseline for a one-week period. At the end of the week, the chart is discussed with each parent and an individualized behavior management plan is formulated.

The target behavior is defined, for example, as playing cooperatively. This means playing with his brother without hitting him.

This is the time the child interacts with his sibling. Thus, the hours in the form would be:

7 a.m./8 a.m./3 p.m./4 p.m./5 p.m./6 p.m./7 p.m./8 p.m./9 p.m./10 p.m.

The rewards are scheduled on a daily and weekly basis. They are individualized with the parent, based on the child's needs. For example, if the child earns ten X's for playing cooperatively on Friday, he may receive an ice cream. If he earns 70 X's for the week, he will earn a trip to a movie.

The rewards are listed on a chart at home, ranging from greatest reward to least reward.

DAILY RECORD SHEET

X = Playing cooperatively with brother

										Daily Total
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										

Weekly Total _____

Schedule for rewards

1. Daily

   10 - greatest amount of reward

   8-9 - next greatest amount of reward

   4-7 - next less great amount of reward

   1-3 - least amount of reward

   0 - no reward

2. Weekly

   70 - greatest amount of reward

   60-69 - next greatest amount of reward

   50-59 - next less great amount of reward

   40-49 - next less great amount of reward

   30-39 - next less great amount of reward

   20-29 - next less great amount of reward

   10-19 - next less great amount of reward

   1-9 - least amount of reward

Rewards List

1. Social Rewards: hugs, kisses, statements of praise, approval, smiling, pat on the back

2. Non-Social Rewards: favorite foods, special privileges (i.e., playing a game, watching TV, a trip on the weekend, privileges or allowances

Clearly list rewards on the chart by listing the most reward to the least reward (i.e., greatest reward: trip to the movies; least reward: ice cream cone).

"PLAIN TALK" about Dealing with the Angry Child

Handling children's anger can be puzzling, draining, and distressing for adults. In fact, one of the major problems in dealing with anger in children is our difficulty in handling the anger that their feelings stir up in us. It has been said that we as parents, teachers, counselors and administrators need to remind outselves that we were not always taught how to deal with anger as a fact of life during our childhood. We were led to believe that to be angry was to be bad, and we were often made to feel guilty for expressing anger.

It will be easier to deal with children's anger if we get rid of this notion. Our goal is not to repress or destroy angry feelings in children - or in ourselves - but rather to accept the feelings and to help channel and direct them to constructive ends.

Parents and teachers must allow children to feel all their feelings. Adult skills can then be directed toward showing children acceptable ways of expressing their feelings. Strong feelings cannot be denied, and angry outbursts should not always be viewed as a sign of serious problems; they should be recognized and treated with respect.

To respond effectively to overly aggressive behavior in children, we need to have some ideas about what may have triggered an outburst. Anger may be a defense to avoid painful feelings; it may be associated with failure, low self-esteem and feelings of isolation; or it may be related to anxiety about situations over which the child has no control.

Angry defiance may also be associated with feelings of dependency, and anger may be associated with sadness and depression. In childhood, anger and sadness are very close to one another and it is important to remember that much of what an adult experiences as sadness is expressed by a child as anger.

Before we look at specific ways to manage aggressive and angry outburts, several points should be highlighted:

*We should distinguish between anger and aggression. Anger is a temporary emotional state caused by frustration; aggression is often an attempt to hurt a person or to destroy property.

*Anger and aggression do not have to be dirty words. In other words, in looking at aggressive behavior in children, we must be careful to distinguish between behavior that indicates emotional problems and behavior that is normal.

In dealing with angry children, our actions should be motivated by the need to protect and to teach, not by a desire to punish. Parents and teachers should show a child that they accept his or her feelings, while suggesting other ways to express the feelings. An adult might

say, for example, "Let me tell you what some children would do in a situation like this..." It is not enough to tell children what behaviors we find unacceptable, we must also teach them acceptable ways of coping, and ways must be found to communicate what we expect of children. Contrary to popular opinion, punishment is not the most effective way to communicate to children what we expect of them.

Responding to the Angry Child

Some of the following suggestions for dealing with the angry child were taken from The Aggressive Child by Fritz Redl and David Wineman. They should be considered helpful ideas and not be seen as a "bag of tricks".

*Catch the child being good. Tell the child what behaviors please you. Respond to positive efforts and reinforce good behavior. An observing and sensitive parent will find countless opportunities during the day to make such comments as, "I like the way you come in for dinner without being reminded"; "I appreciate your hanging up your clothes even though you were in a hurry to get out to play"; "You were really patient while I was on the phone"; "I'm glad you shared your snack with your sister"; "I like the way you're able to think of others"; and "Thank you for telling the truth about what really happened."

*Deliberately ignore inappropriate behavior that can be tolerated. This doesn't mean that you should ignore the child, just the behavior. The "ignoring" has to be planned and consistent. Even though this behavior may be tolerated, the child must recognize that it is inappropriate.

*Provide physical outlets and other alternatives. It is important for children to have opportunities for physical exercise and movement, both at home and at school.

*Manipulate the surroundings. Aggressive behavior can be encouraged by placing children in tough, tempting situations. We should try to plan the surroundings so that certain things are less apt to happen. Stop a "problem" activity and substitute, temporarily, a more desirable one. Sometimes rules and regulations, as well as physical space, may be too confining.

*Use closeness and touching. Move physically closer to the child to curb his or her angry impulse. Young children are often calmed by having an adult nearby.

*Express interest in the child's activities. Children naturally try to involve adults in what they are doing, and the adult is often annoyed at being bothered. Very young children (and children who are emotionally deprived) seem to need much more adult involvement in their interests. A child about to use a toy or tool in a destructive way is sometimes easily stopped by an adult who expresses interest in having it shown to him. An outburst from an older child struggling with a difficult reading selection can be prevented by a caring adult who moves near the child to say, "Show me the words giving you trouble."

*Be ready to show affection. Sometimes all that is needed for any angry child to regain control is a sudden hug or other impulsive show of affection. Children with serious emotional problems, however, may have trouble accepting affection.

*Ease tension through humor. Kidding the child out of a temper tantrum or outburst offers the child an opportunity to "save face". However, it is important to distinguish between face-saving humor and sarcasm or teasing ridicule.

*Appeal directly to the child. Tell him or her how you feel and ask for consideration. For example, a parent or a teacher may gain a child's cooperation by saying, "I know that noise you're making doesn't usually bother me, but today I've got a headache, so could you find something else you'd enjoy doing?"

*Explain situations. Help the child understand the cause of a stressful situation. We often fail to realize how easily young children can begin to react properly once they understand the cause of their frustration.

*Use physical restraint. Occasionally a child may lose control so completely that he has to be physically restrained or removed from the scene to prevent him from hurting himself or others. This may also "save face" for the child. Physical restraint or removal from the scene should not be viewed by the child as punishment but as a means of saying, "You can't do that." In such situations, an adult cannot afford to lose his or her temper, and unfriendly remarks by other children should not be tolerated.

*Encourage the child to see his strengths as well as his weaknesses. Help the child to see that he can reach his goals.

*Use promises and rewards. Promises of future pleasure can be used both to start and to stop behavior. This approach should not be compared with bribery. We must know what the child likes - what brings him pleasure - and we must deliver on our promises.

*Say "NO!" Limits should be clearly explained and enforced. Children should be free to function within those limits.

*Tell the child that you accept his or her angry feelings, but offer other suggestions for expressing them. Teach children to put their angry feelings into words, rather than fists.

*Build a positive self-image. Encourage the child to see himself as a valued and valuable person.

*Use punishment cautiously. There is a fine line between punishment that is hostile toward a child and punishment that is educational.

*Model appropriate behavior. Parents and teachers should be aware of the powerful influence of their actions on a child's or group's behavior.

*Teach children to express themselves verbally. Talking helps a child have control and thus reduces acting-out behavior. Encourage the child to say, for example, "I don't like your taking my pencil"; "I don't feel like sharing just now."

The Role of Discipline

Good discipline includes creating an atmosphere of quiet firmness, clarity and conscientiousness, while using reasoning. Bad discipline involves punishment which is unduly harsh and inappropriate, and is often associated with verbal ridicule and attacks on the child's integrity.

As one fourth-grade teacher put it: "One of the most important goals we strive for as parents, educators and mental health professionals is to help children develop respect for themselves and others." While arriving at this goal takes years of patient practice, it is a vital process in which parents, teachers and all caring adults can play a crucial and exciting role. In order to accomplish this, we must see children as worthy human beings and be sincere in dealing with them.

Adapted from "The Aggressive Child" by Luleen S. Anderson, which appeared in Children Today (Jan.-Feb. 1978) published by the Children's Bureau, ACYF, CHEW. (Reprinting permission unnecessary.)

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PCPS

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Certificate of Achievement

THIS AWARD OF RECOGNITION IS PRESENTED TO

_____

FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AND COMPLETION IN THE TOPS PARENTS GROUP.

THIS ____ DAY OF _____, 198 ___

SIGNED: _____

_____

MIS-12638 (09-81)

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Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.

Age Discrimination Act of 1967, as amended - prohibits discrimination on the basis of age between 40 and 70.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - prohibits discrimination against the handicapped.

Veterans are provided re-employment rights in accordance with P.L. 93-504 (Federal) and Florida State Law, Chapter 77-422, which also stipulates categorical preferences for employment